

Educational Rehabilitation of Child Labourers from Carpet Industry

**Under the Support of
Ministry of Labour, Government of India**

Some Case-Studies

Shamshad Khan



Centre for Rural Education and Development Action

490, Awas Vikas Colony, Mirzapur-231001 (U.P.) INDIA

Tel: +91-5442-220285 (Off), 220284 (Res)

E-mail: we@credaindia.org, samshad@sancharnet.in

www.credaindia.org

Educational Rehabilitation of Child Labourers from Carpet Industry

(Under the Support of Ministry of Labour, Government of India)

Some Case-Studies

- *Shamshad Khan*

Case Study No.: 1

Keshav Kumar, M.A.

(former bonded child labour)

Keshav Kumar was of the age of eight years when he was pledged to a carpet loom. His father took Rs. 2,000 from the loom-holder and the child was bonded. Keshav Kumar belongs to a landless *dalit* family. Initially, he worked on carpet loom as an apprentice for one year and after that he started weaving the carpet. He has to work from 8:00 a.m. till the sunset. For small mistakes, he was being beaten by the loom-holder. The advance of Rs. 2,000 was not given at a time but in installments. Keshav Kumar says that if his father took the advance of one hundred rupees, the loom-holder makes it two hundred rupees in his record. He was also given two rupees per day for whole day carpet weaving. This money was apart from the loan amount. The life was difficult and cumbersome but Keshav Kumar had to continue under pressure. The tiring and long hours of work was often resulting in sickness of Keshav Kumar.

Keshav Kumar son of Mr. Jayram belongs to Rajpur village of Halia block in Mirzapur district. This was the year 1987-88 that CREDA launched a massive campaign in whole of the carpet belt against child labour and bonded child labour. Volunteer teams were moving village to village to identify the children working as bonded labour in carpet industry and agriculture sector. During the campaign, the team came to know about the condition of Keshav Kumar. The parents were motivated to take the child out of bondage but it was not easy because the loom-holder was putting all pressure for the repayment of money advanced to the father.

While talking about his past life, Keshav Kumar says that when he joined the CREDA school, it was a pleasant moment for him and he was enjoying being in school. But quite often he has to meet with awkward situations. Keshav Kumar narrates that when he was leaving his home for the school, the loom-holder many times stopped him on the road and snatched the school bag and was also threatening for dire consequences if he goes to school and was pressurizing the child to come back to the carpet loom.

Through the process of reconciliation and motivation, Keshav Kumar was withdrawn from bondage at the age of nine years and was put in Child Labour School. He passed class 5th from this school and was mainstreamed in class 6th in government aided school. Now, Keshav Kumar has completed his master's degree (M.A.) and served as teacher in a school of CREDA for child workers.

Case Study No.: 2

Ashok Kumar, M.A. (Final Year)

(former bonded child labour)

Ashok Kumar was pledged for Rs. 4,000 to a loom-holder for carpet weaving. Ashok Kumar son of Mr. Ram Taukal belongs to a landless *dalit* family. In lieu of the advances taken by his father from loom-holder, Ashok Kumar had to work for ten hours per day without any weekly holiday and was being subjected to beating and abuses. Ashok Kumar says that while working on the carpet loom, he was always feeling headaches, backaches, eye trouble, etc. He says that when he was seeing other children going to school, he was always feeling to get rid of bondage and join the school. He was seeing the children playing around but was unable to join them because of fear of his master.

Ashok Kumar often requested his father to enroll him in the school but his father showed his inability to do so because he was not able to repay Rs. 4,000 which he took as advance after pledging Ashok Kumar. Ashok Kumar was withdrawn from the work by pressure group in the community and volunteers of CREDA and was enrolled in child labour school from where he passed class 5th in three years in first division. He was given all moral and materials support to continue his schooling. The loom-holder started pressurizing his father to take back the child from the school and put him on the loom and also rumoured that the CREDA people will sell off his son and he will never get back him.

Motivation from CREDA and community continued for Ashok Kumar. He was mainstreamed in a Government aided school from where he passed class 12th and selected by CREDA as a volunteer teacher but he continued his education as a private candidate and this year he will be completing his master's degree from Purvanchal University.

Case Study No.: 3

Atma Ram, Dip. in Electrical Engineering

(former bonded child labour)

Atma Ram was also rescued from a carpet loom where he was working as bonded child labour. He was pledged by his father for some amount and Atma Ram lost his childhood on carpet looms. About ten years ago, for Atma Ram childhood meant only making carpets for an small amount of rupees 150 to 200 a month. Atma ram was also identified as bonded labour through the process of social mobilization by volunteers and supporters of CREDA. Atma Ram narrates his childhood stories and says that his life was like hell under carpet shed he was being abused and misbehaved often by his master. He was given opportunity by CREDA to reach upto the level of primary education and then he was mainstreamed in government school. After passing 12th standard Atma Ram attempted for admission in Government Polytechnic in Mirzapur and he was successfully enrolled for the course of diploma in electrical engineering. He has a dream for not only for him but to bring about many changes in his village. Intervention of CREDA has not only changed the life of Atma Ram but also focusing on him as role model for other children who are experiencing childhood similar to Atma Ram.

Case Study No.: 4

Rakesh Kumar, I.T.I. (Fitter) (former bonded child labour)

Before intervention of CREDA, Rakesh never knew what childhood means for him? He belong to a *dalit* family. Father and mother both work as a daily wage earners. They are landless and live in a small *harijan* hamlet in the Rajpur village in a thatched house. Rakesh was subjected to many inhuman behaviour by his master who advanced Rs. 5,000 to his father for pledging Rakesh to work as carpet weaver at the age of nearly nine years.

Rakesh was identified as a bonded child labour by CREDA team and after long persuasion, the parents agreed to withdraw him from looms but on the other side the loom-holder was not agreeing to release Rakesh because of Rs. 5,000 loan given to his father. This was a difficult situation for CREDA as CREDA did not had enough money to repay loans to the loom-holder for release of the children from bondage. After long meeting involving panchayat, community, parents and loom holder, it was decided that the loom-holder will free the child to get enrolled in a CREDA school and advance taken by the parents will be repaid in small installments.

Rakesh spent three years with CREDA and passed class 5th in first division and was further mainstreamed in class 6th. Rakesh, after passing intermediate qualified for admission in Industrial Training Institute, Mirzapur and he is doing Fitter Trade training with a hope of better opportunity in life.

Case Study No.: 5

Ram Bhawan, M.A. (Final Year) (former bonded child labour)

The cost of childhood for Ram Bhawan was Rs. 3,000. This was the amount that made the early life of Ram Bhawan like hell. He started working as bonded child labour at the age of nine year in the loom-shed of Ram Kishor in Ahugi Kalan village of Mirzapur district. The loan was taken for the treatment of the mother. Ram Bhawan worked as bonded child labour for three years and the working time was from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. he was never allowed to mix and play with other children. He says that the loom-shed was dark and unventilated like a *Kaal Kothari*. He was subjected to many inhuman behaviour including abusing and beating. While weaving the carpet, when there was a cut in finger the loom-holder was putting kerosene oil on the wound and cut. His father although was keen to send the child to school but repayment of advances taken from the loom-holder was a big impediment. The parents contacted CREDA volunteers and staff. CREDA applied similar strategies as in other cases to release the child from bondage. Ram Bhawan was put in school and brought upto the level of primary education in three years and was further mainstreamed.

After graduation, Ram Bhawan was given opportunity to work in CREDA as a Para-teacher. He will be completing his master's degree (M.A.) this year as a private candidate from Purvanchal University.

Case Study No.: 6

Lalta Prasad, B.A., (Shiksha Mitra)

(former bonded child labour)

He was only eight years, when he was forced to work on a carpet loom belonging to Janak Maurya. His father is a landless labourer. For the marriage of his daughter, his father took Rs. 4,000 as loan from Janak Maurya and that brought misfortune for little Lalta Prasad. When CREDA staff and volunteer tried to take the children out of bondage, the loom-holder resisted but finally the matter was settled by the community. Kashi Ram, father of Lalta Prasad, sold his bullock in Rs. 1,500 and the money received thus paid to Janak Maurya as part payment and the remaining balance of Rs. 2,500 was decided in a meeting to be paid in installments. Thus, the loom-holder agreed to relieve the child from bondage.

Lalta Prasad along with his parents came to field office of CREDA situated near his village and got enrolled in the child labour school of CREDA. He spent three years and passed class 5th. Now, Lalta Prasad has done his graduation (B.A.). He was given the opportunity to serve as an instructor in the school for child workers. He is one of the fortunate persons who have been selected as **Shiksha Mitra** under *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)*.

Case Study No.: 7

Phoolchand, M.A. (Final Year)

(former bonded child labour)

Phoolchand passed class 5th in first division from Child Labour School of CREDA, thereafter he was mainstreamed and continued gaining first division in class 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th. He got a new lease of life in the year 1988 when CREDA team reached his workplace, where he was bonded for Rs. 3,000 when he was of the age of ten years. He was not alone on the loom, there were few more children from his nearby village. They were languishing their childhood on the same loom. This was the time that a movement of CREDA against child and bonded child labour picked a momentum. Phoolchand told that he has to work from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on the loom and often under pressure he has to spend the night under the loom-shed for weaving carpet even upto late night. One primary school, which was situated 2 kms. away from his residence, had no meaning for him. After getting release from bondage, he contacted many other child and bonded child labourers whom he knew and persuaded these children to contact CREDA. All of them were enrolled in the school. While remembering his first day in the school, Phoolchand says that he felt that "My whole life is changed and I got a new life which has begun from today."

In spite of threatening, road blocking, school bag snatching by the loom-holder, the bonded children were gaining strength from community and CREDA, which resulted in empowering the children to speak out against exploitative system. Phoolchand was also instrumental in getting many other children out of bondage and into school.

Note: The above case studies are based on the statement of former bonded child labourers and our record. The case study is being presented in edited and translated form.

- Shamshad Khan